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ABSTRACT

An experimental sound- and video-library has recently been established by the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pedagogiques en Langues at the University of Nancy II. This article describes the functioning of the library system and gives a brief explanation of the underlying pedagogical principles which have guided the design, choice of equipment and layout. The library was designed so that students would be able to find the right kind of materials whenever they were free and ready to use them. Therefore, it was necessary to have an abundant and varied supply of adequate materials in stock, a practical filing system and convenient opening times. It was also necessary to persuade students that they could be their own tutors. The equipment chosen consists of 12 booths with audio-active-comparative cassette recorders, 20 cassette-players, and a listening unit, consisting of a tape-recorder and eight earphones, and ten video cassette recorders, each linked to a black and white TV screen. The statistics show a promising and steady rise in the number of requests for materials in the library. (Author/CFM)

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MELANGES PEDAGOGIQUES 1976

P. RILEY and C. ZOPPIS

THE SOUND AND VIDEO LIBRARY : AN INTERIM REPORT ON AN EXPERIMENT

FL009019

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RESUME

Cet article comprend quatre parties principales :

I. Genèse de la Sono-videothèque, et description des installations.

II. Fonctionnement de la Sono-videothèque.

III. Extensions envisagées.

IV. Premières statistiques.

I. Dès 1973, une équipe du C.R.A.P.E.L. mit en chantier un projet de Sono-videothèque qui devait non seulement permettre de répondre à de nouveaux besoins en anglais, nés de l'application de textes ministériels définissant les Diplômes d'Etudes Universitaires Générales, mais aussi de mener une expérience originale dans le domaine de l'apprentissage autonome. La Sono-videothèque, ouverte en février 1975, est le résultat de cette réflexion pédagogique ; elle a été réalisée grâce à l'attribution par le Ministère de moyens financiers spécifiques, correspondant au prix de deux laboratoires « lourds » de 18 cabines. Les différentes sections de la Sono-videothèque sont décrites dans cette première partie, et un plan permet de localiser chacune d'elles.

II. La deuxième partie est une présentation de la procédure suivie par l'étudiant pour le choix, la demande et l'utilisation du document (Cours, ou document « brut » authentique, sonore et/ou télévisuel) correspondant à ses besoins. Le système de classement retenu pour le fichier est décrit en détail, et illustré par un exemple de fiche et un extrait de la liste des mots clefs. Sont également présentés les trois types d'activité linguistique pratiqués en Sono-videothèque : la compréhension orale, l'expression orale, et la compréhension « télévisuelle ».

III. Dans la troisième partie, les auteurs envisagent les extensions souhaitables à moyen terme : l'accroissement du nombre de documents, ainsi que la mise en place d'un prêt de cassettes son à domicile.

IV. Les statistiques correspondant à une période de fonctionnement de 16 mois sont données dans la quatrième partie.

I. BACKGROUND AND LAYOUT

When the " Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Générales " (DEUG) was first announced by the Ministry of Education in 1973, it appeared that some students whose curriculum had not previously included languages would be required to study one modern language. English was sure to be a favourite, and the Ministry was prepared to pay for two language laboratories of eighteen booths each which, they thought, would help provide an adequate answer to the teaching problem posed by this new public.

Our experience of language laboratories, which we think have a useful but limited part to play in the learning of a foreing language [1], together with our deeply-felt desire to launch an experiment aimed at developing the student's capacity to teach himself, led a team from the C.R.A.P.E.L. to design and put forward a project for a Sound and Video Library. This, we thought would not only cater for the new needs created by the DEUG, but would also give all students of English an easy contact with the spoken word which they are otherwise denied, since in Nancy it is practically impossible for them to listen to any programmes broadcast by English-speaking radio stations, all far too distant. Among the possible users of the Sound and Video Library, we included students who take English as their main subject, others who take it as a subsidiary subject, and extra-mural students.

In fact, we estimated the number of potential users at about 4,000, in the event of 80 % of the total DEUG students (4,922) opting for English. By opening the projected Sound and Video Library 50 hours a week, it would be possible to accommodate each student for 1 1/2 hours a week, with an average attendance of 60 students per hour, which was much more than could have been done with the two language laboratories initially proposed.

If one of our initial aims was to make sure that the Sound and Video Library would actually be able to take in all its potential users for as long as possible each week, we also wanted it to be a place where we would apply some of the pedagogical principles and strategies we firmly believe in [2]. Foremost among these was the principle of *autonomous learning* for advanced and for fairly advanced students. In our view, students who have reached a certain level in English can improve their listening comprehension, their oral expression or their written comprehension by regularly working in semi-autonomy with

[1] See Bouillon (1971), Holec (1971), Holec & Kuhn (1971), Riley (1974), Harding & Legras (1974).

2 See Abe et al. (1975), Cembalo & Gremmo (1973), Cembalo & Holec (1973).

adequately prepared teaching material or in complete autonomy using " raw ", *authentic material*[3]. For instance, frequent exposure to authentic documents over a fairly long period seems to us to be indispensable for any progress in listening comprehension, just as a frequent use of the linguistic code is absolutely necessary if one wants to make some headway in speaking a language. This type of autonomous learning presupposes the setting up of new pedagogical strategies, which complement the more traditional types.

For one thing, students must be able to find the *right kind of materials whenever they are free* and ready to use them — hence the necessity for having an abundant and varied supply of adequate materials in stock, a practical filing-system and convenient opening times (ideally the Sound and Video Library should never close). But it is also necessary to persuade students that they can be their own tutors and that the presence of a teacher " in the flesh " is not always indispensable.

Bearing in mind these pedagogical aims and the practical estimates concerning future users, we then proceeded to examine what kind of hardware would serve our purpose best, within the limits imposed by a fixed budget, and by a room which we had not chosen, and which had not been built with that particular use in view : its being on the fourth floor, for instance, is hardly an incentive for the average student unused to any strenuous exercise.

For both the sound and the video sections of the library, we selected cassette recorders made by a European firm which, in 1973, had the greatest experience of this then fairly new type of equipment. Room 407 was divided into four main sections (see chart 1) :

1. The entrance lobby.
2. The sound section.
3. The video section.
4. The technician's section.

1. **The entrance lobby** is equipped with a notice board and a filing-cabinet which is the focus of the whole library.

3 See Dudz et al. (1972, 1973).

2. **The sound section** comprises three different types of equipment :

a) 12 booths, with audio-active-comparative cassette recorders, which are meant for those materials that include oral expression exercises. Each booth can accomodate two students. There is no monitor desk. As will be seen from the diagrams, these booths are arranged in groups of four. Booths are separated from each other by sound-absorbent partitions, arranged diagonally as indicated. This has the advantage of creating enough elbow-room for two students at a time to use a booth, whilst avoiding the strictly classroom discipline of the usual linear layout.

b) 20 cassette-players, making up a listening comprehension unit. Half of these players are fixed on to a table, the other ten constitute a reserve only used when the library is very busy.

c) A listening unit, consisting of a tape-recorder, and eight earphones fixed to the wall at intervals above a long bench. The tape-recorder plays a non-stop programme meant for those students who are only free for a short period of time.

3. **The video section.**

This is made up of ten video cassette recorders, each linked to a black and white TV screen. Two students can watch the same screen simultaneously, and hear the sound-track through earphones.

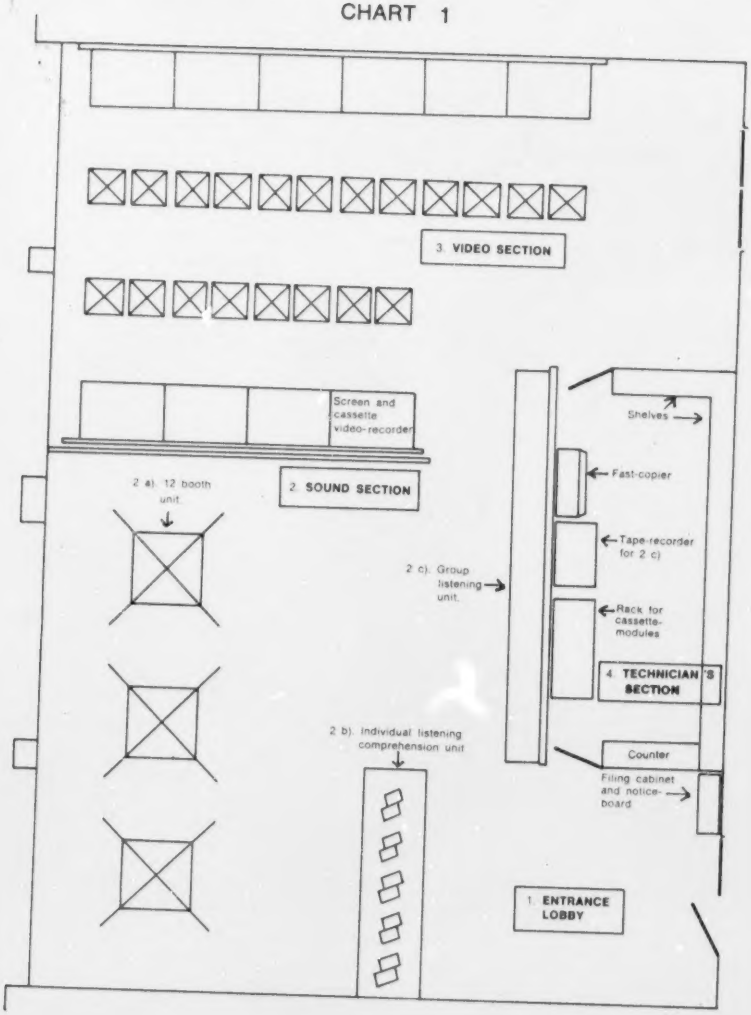
4. **The technician's area,** which contains :

a) Twelve cassette modules, corresponding to the twelve booths described in 2a) above. For security reasons, we thought it a better idea to have the technician feed the cassettes into the machines — which are set in a rack — rather than let the students do it themselves.

b) Shelves for the master tapes, and for at least one cassette copy of most of the documents in stock.

c) A fast-copier, used for preparing cassettes from the master tapes, either in advance or at short notice ; three copies can be made simultaneously at eight times the original speed : i.e. a forty minute recording will be reproduced in five minutes.

CHART 1


3. VIDEO SECTION
Screen and cassette video-recorder
2. SOUND SECTION
2 a). 12 booth unit.
2 c). Group listening unit.
2 b). Individual listening comprehension unit
Shelves
Fast-copier
Tape-recorder for 2 c)
Rack for cassette-modules
4. TECHNICIAN'S SECTION
Counter
Filing cabinet and notice-board
1. ENTRANCE LOBBY

II. FUNCTIONING

In this section, we are going to describe and discuss the procedure which a student follows when he makes a visit to the Sound Library, that is, how he goes about 1) selecting, 2) requesting and 3) using a document. (N.B. " document " is used throughout this article to include all types of material, whether written, tape-recorded or video-recorded). All interested students are taken in groups on a detailed " guided tour " of the sound library to familiarise them with the lay-out and facilities ; this is a preliminary to the methodological training which most need if they are to make the most of their work there.

1. Selecting a document

On arrival in the Sound Library, the student proceeds first to the catalogue, a series of drawers containing filing cards. *The cataloguing system* has been developed to meet three main criteria : it had to be (a) practical, (b) informative and (c) cheap.

(a) **It is practical.**

The cataloguing system can be understood and used by the student himself without any specialist help. Indeed, the cataloguing process itself can be carried out by an intelligent non-librarian : this was an essential characteristic, as the funds were not available for even a part-time librarian. The system itself is based on " key-words ", that is, commonly used notional categories such as " Humour ", " Conversation ", or " Law ", which are coded in a way which is immediately meaningful to the user : HUM., CONV., LAW and so on, followed by a number which simply records the order of arrival of that particular item. HUM 15, then, was the fifteenth recording to be acquisitioned by the library.

In this system, instead of starting out with a complete, encyclopaedic list of categories into which documents are sorted on arrival, we create categories in an ad hoc fashion as documents actually arrive. Obviously, such a system is considerably less detailed or refined — less systematic, in fact — than the professional librarian's taxonomies : nor does it handle the special problems of recorded materials with any particular subtlety, leaving decisions as to who is the author of an interview, or when an interview is a discussion, to the discretion

of intuition of the cataloguer rather than basing them on any objective criteria. But experience has shown that it is efficient enough for our purposes. A generous amount of cross-referencing reduces this risk of a student's missing an item completely, and the full list of key-words is always displayed prominently above the catalogue.

Below is an extract from the list of key words. It is important to remember that key-words are only created when needed, and that a conceptual blank is not an omission : it simply means that no document on that particular topic has as yet been received by the library.

JRN JOURNALISM

LANG LANGUAGES
- etymology

LAW LAW

LIT LITERATURE
- book review
- drama
- essays
- novel
- poetry
- Sherlock Holmes
- short story
- Wordsworth

MED MEDECINE

MON MONOLOGUE

MUS MUSIC
- business
- freelance musicians
- opera
- quiz

NTH NATURAL HISTORY

NR NATURAL RESOURCES
- coal
- mining
- oil

NEWS NEWS

PNT PAINTING

POL POLITICS
- France
- local
- nationalism
- race relations
- terrorism

PLT POLLUTION

POP POPULATION

PUB PUBLIC SPEAKING

RAD RADIO
- children's programmes
- comedy
- discussion
- drama
- interview
- magazine
- series

Although the " key-words " cataloguing system can be applied to any collection of documents, this particular list applies exclusively to the contents of the Nancy Sound Library.

(b) **It is informative.**

In order to help the student in his choice and to reduce the number of unnecessary, inaccurate or unsatisfactory requests, the maximum possible amount of information should be included on each filing card entered in the catalogue. This information falls under three broad headings :

(i) Information helping in the *retrieval* of the item : coding, title, etc...

(ii) Information concerning the *content* of the recording ; synopsis, cross-references ;

(iii) Linguistic information : spontaneity, accents, speed.

This information is presented to the student in the following way :

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">A : Author, interviewer</td><td>B : Source</td><td>C : Code</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">D : Title :
Series :</td><td>E : Written document</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">F : Synopsis :</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">G : Key words - cross-references</td></tr>
<tr><td>H : Spontaneous
Non-spont</td><td rowspan="2">J : Accents</td><td rowspan="2">K : Speed</td><td>L : Length of recording</td></tr>
<tr><td>I : Archive N°</td><td>M : Date of recording</td></tr>
</table>

A : *Author or interviewer*

This heading has often to be interpreted extremely loosely (" person responsible for a recording ", " leading figure or personality involved ", etc...), or even to be left blank ; but at other times, of course, it is of major importance.

B : *Source*

Where did the recording come from ? Was it published commercially, was it made privately, was it a gift from the British Council, Voice of America or another University ?

C : *Code*

See a) above.

D : *Title and series*

It is often both necessary and convenient to invent a title for a recording which does not have one. The " Series " acts as a useful further cross-reference.

E : *Written document*

If there is a written document of any kind to accompany the tape — a textbook, a transcription, a newspaper article or a script — it is marked here. The student has to request it separately.

F : *Synopsis*

What is the recording *about* ? This should help the student decide whether or not it will be of interest to him, and it may also help him follow certain aspects of the recording when he listens to it.

G : *Key-words*

Cross-references to related items and headings in the catalogue which may also be of interest to the student.

H : *Spontaneous/non-spontaneous*

Is the recording " spoken prose " (i.e. someone reading aloud) or is it unrehearsed speech ?

I : *Archive Number*

Of no interest to the student.

J : *Accents*

One of the main problems facing the foreign learner is the variety of British and American accents. By indicating what accents are present in any given recording, the card enables the student to choose or reject it according to his level of attainment and interests.

K · *Speed*

A rather impressionistic attempt is made here to indicate to the learner the speeds at which participants in the recording talk. Each participant is marked on a scale from 1 (very slow) to 5 (very fast) by native speakers.

Taken together, H, J and K should give the learner a reasonably clear impression of the level of linguistic difficulty presented by a particular recording. If the quality of a recording is poor, a comment to that effect is usually included under F (synopsis).

Below is an example of an entry under " CRIME " :

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Bill Monroe
Frank McGee</td><td>Voice of
America</td><td>CR 10</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Federal regulations to combat air hijacking
Series : Crosstalk</td><td>Transcript</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">A discussion concerning new security measures and laws on air piracy</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">CRIME : Hijacking : Travel : Air : US Law</td></tr>
<tr><td>Spontaneous</td><td rowspan="2">U.S.</td><td rowspan="2">BM : 5
FMcG : 3</td><td>10'</td></tr>
<tr><td>299</td><td>12/1/72</td></tr>
</table>

(c) **It is cheap.**

In the cataloguing system described above, no special supports, materials, or machines are required. A filing cabinet, filing cards and a typewriter are all that is necessary.

The considerable amount of work involved in listening to new tapes, summarising and describing their contents and (sometimes) transcribing the recordings is carried out by one of the young English or American " lecteurs " who work at the University each year and who each have an hour or two of this kind of work included in their duties. In addition, the library employs a secretary for a few hours each week whose main task is classifying and typing our new entries in the catalogue.

2. Requesting a document

Having selected an item from the file, the student fills in a request-slip, which he hands to the technician or library assistant at the desk. The request slips provide the data for the statistics given below.

Emprunteur			Place		Cote du Document
NOM					Lettres :
PRENOM					Chiffres :
Spécialiste d'anglais	1re année 2e année " L "	☐ ☐ ☐	Capes Agrég Enseignant	☐ ☐ ☐	DATE
DEUG 5 %	Droit Sces Eco Psycho-Socio	☐ ☐ ☐	Cours du Soir Autres	☐ ☐	Donné à h Rendu à h
Observations :					Transcription Sortie ☐ Rendue ☐

(a) If the request is for a course tape requiring student-recording facilities, the student is directed to one of the audio-active-comparative booths (2 a) on Chart 1). The technician places the cassette in the corresponding slot in the console, but the student retains complete control through the switches in his booth, even though he is physically separated from it.

(b) If the request is for a videotape, the technician himself sets the cassette in place and operates the videoscope (3. on Chart 1). Students are requested never to touch this equipment : they are less familiar with this type of machine ant it is more delicate and expensive. This means that students wishing to work intensively on the language of a videotape cannot keep stopping and starting the tape. Instead, a recording of the sound-track is also made available ; having watched the document, the student moves to one of the listening posts where he is able to work on the recording as he wishes.

(c) If the request is for any other document the technicien will probably have to make a cassette copy on the fast-copier while the student waits. The student takes the cassette from the technician and goes to one of the listening posts (2 b) on Chart 1), where he himself inserts it into the cassette player and operates the machine.

3. Using documents

The type of work which can be done with sound and video-cassette recordings varies greatly. Indeed, one of the main advantages of the Sound Library is that it allows users to discover their own learning techniques. Whereas in the traditional language laboratory full audio-active-comparative facilities are provided in every booth, whether the student working there needs them or not, in the Sound Library different types of equipment are provided for different types of work. For example, a student working on listening comprehension does not need recording facilities, so a simple cassette-player is enough : there are sound financial as well as pedagogical reasons for making this kind of distinction, since *one* language laboratory booth costs the equivalent of *thirty* cassette players.

The various types of work can be grouped under three main headings :

a. Listening comprehension [Sections 2 b) and c)]

b. Oral expression [Section 2 a)]

c. Viewing comprehension [Section 3].

a. Listening comprehension

A wide range of documents is available to the learner wishing to practice this skill. By choosing between didactic and authentic materials and between recordings for which there are and are not written texts, the learner is able to

vary the level and approach. In many cases, he is also able to select documents which satisfy his specialised requirements : if, for example, he is preparing to attend a learned congress, he will find recordings of academic seminars ; if he wants to be able to follow the news, he will find recordings of news-broadcasts. By working as far as possible on authentic documents relevant to his specific needs, the learner makes a more economic use of his time and reduces the gap between the learning-situation and the real-life situation for which he is preparing. Where possible, learners are shown various techniques by teachers of other courses they may be following - some kind of methodological preparation is usually necessary. In general all types of comprehension exercise which can be done in a class with a teacher can also be done by the learner working alone.

There are also specialised courses available, written by members of the C.R.A.P.E.L. (H. Holec : *Cours de Compréhension Orale*. Longman, 1975 ; F. Roussel · *Cours Avancé de Compréhension Orale*, 1972, C.R.A.P.E.L., Université de Nancy II).

b. **Oral Expression**

The library possesses a range of courses in oral expression, either commercially published, or produced by the C.R.A.P.E.L. itself. Learners work in the laboratory-type booths, recording, repeating, listening and answering. Materials are available on specific aspects of English : phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and communicative functions. Students are guided in their choice either by their teachers in class or by the " moniteurs " who are present in the library during certain periods each week. For users not following other courses a grid classifying materials in terms of skills and levels is displayed on the notice-board.

c. **Viewing comprehension**

Little close study has as yet been made of viewing comprehension (though we intend to investigate this skill during the coming year). At present it is little more than an act of faith that " watching T.V. is good for you ". Again, the emphasis is on authentic recordings.

Apart from the three linguistic activities mentioned above, it is worth noting that an increasing number of students are attending the library not so much to improve their English, as to find information. Students of law, economics, etc..., find up-to-date discussions of immediate relevance to their field of study,

or lectures by well-known experts. Nor should we exclude from serious consideration those students who attend simply because they enjoy it, finding in Hancock's Half Hour, or American Folk Music, or Hamlet, a source of civilised entertainment.

III. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The most immediate and obvious problem facing the Sound Library is the acquisition of further materials. Although the present collection is already fairly large (approximately 1,000 items, consisting of 40 T.V. recordings, 20 courses, and some 950 authentic documents), it is still not varied enough to meet many of the specialised needs of some of the users. Ideally, a cardiologist due to chair a conference, or a travel agent needing to speak and understand English on the phone, would find relevant authentic recordings in the library to work on. At present, our policy is to accept almost any recording we are offered, at the same time trying to obtain recordings to meet particular needs as they arise. The major institutional sources of recordings have already been tapped and to a large extent we are now dependent on exchange arrangements with individuals : we can afford only a small number of commercially-published materials. T.V. and sound recordings are also regularly produced here, but it is quite impossible to get the necessary variety to satisfy all interests and needs.

A major development being considered is the establishment of a home-loan system for sound cassettes. Since large numbers of people now possess cassette recorders or players, and since the same cassette can be re-used a number of times, such a system would be quite feasible as far as the users are concerned. But it is doubtful whether the library's present copying facilities would be able to meet both internal and external demands, and it is certain that the library's present secretarial and administrative personnel would have to be increased : the one part-timer at present employed could not possibly cope.

As a first, tentative step, a home-loan system has been operated exclusively for a group of 100 extra-mural students (although only about half this number actually availed themselves of it). Although the results were in general encouraging, and the system operated smoothly, our experience is too limited to allow of further generalisaton.

The Sound Library described in this article is an attempt to develop in a concrete way the pedagogical and technologic experience gained in language

laboratories and classrooms during the last decade. It is itself still at the experimental stage : consequently, it is necessary to keep all aspects of the functioning of the library under close observation, hence the details required on the request-slips, for example.

We need to know how learners work under these conditions, what techniques and strategies they adopt, and what problems crop up. On the basis of the information thus acquired, it should be possible to improve the presentation of all types of documents. We also hope to establish a repertoire of working procedures which could be investigated, extended and taught to other users : such research is essential if autonomous learning schemes are to be anything more than a mixture of guesswork and do-it-yourself. Already several postgraduate students have carried out studies on specific aspects of the library and its work, and statistics have been collected on a number of topics (see below).

IV. **STATISTICS**

The request slips which the students fill in are kept and at regular intervals sorted out and classified so as to obtain :

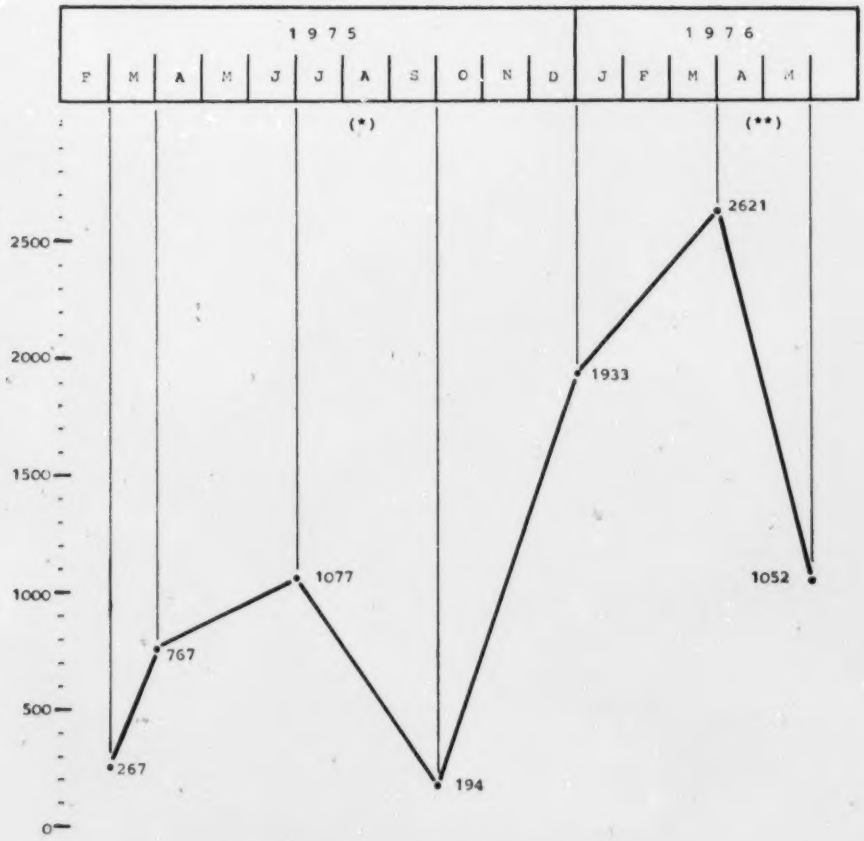
1. The figures concerning the number of requests globally and for each of the three main types of documents available (Courses - Authentic Documents - TV Programmes).
2. Attendance figures according to the day of the week and the time of day.
3. Information about what departments the students come from.

Applications (see CHART 2)

For the period from the opening in February 1975 to the end of May 1976, the statistics show a very promising and steady rise in the number of requests. The two drops in the graph correspond to two periods of reduced activity : the first concerns the summer vacations in 1975, when the Sound Library was only open two half-days a week, and the second coincides with the 1976 students' strike, during most of which it was absolutely impossible for students to enter the university buildings.

The total number of requests for 16 months is 7,644, which gives an average figure of 637 requests a month. Of course this does not mean that 7,644 different students have used the library !

CHART 2



REQUESTS FOR DOCUMENTS

(*) = University vacation
(**)= Students' strike

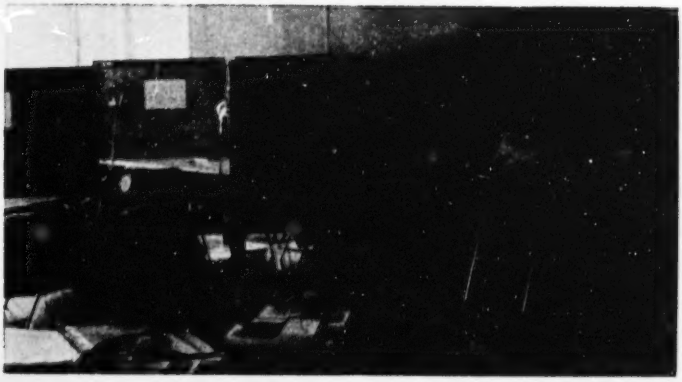
These 7,644 request slips can be classified as follows :

4466 applications for courses
1633 " " TV programmes
1547 " " sound documents

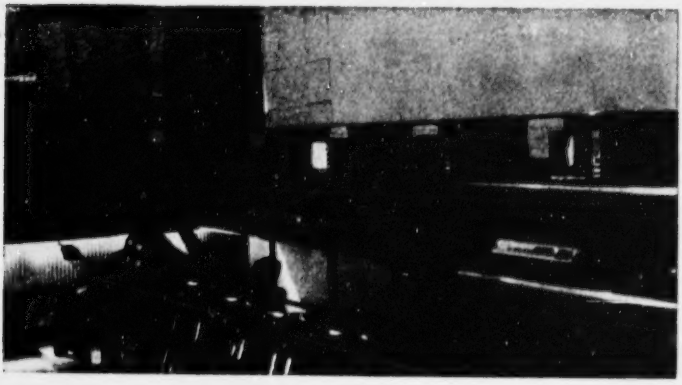
The most striking fact is the success of TV programmes, which are not very numerous but extremely popular (in fact the Library so far only possesses 40 video-recordings).

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Tuesdays (in that order) are the busiest days of the week, and though on Mondays and Fridays the Sound Library does not work to its full capacity, the increasing attendance on those days is very promising.

The library is open 53 hours per week in term-time.



The sound- and video- library : Sound section showing individual listening comprehension units in foreground, and behind, language laboratory units.



The sound- and video- library : Video section showing screens and video-cassette recorders.

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